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ABSTRACT

In the book, "Talking from 9 to 5," Deborah Tannen suggests that females have difficulty listening to males in the workplace because of the masculine inclination to talk sports the majority of the time. Men use sports idioms, metaphors, and cliches, making business a "peculiar language" which excludes "naive" listeners, females. To test the hypothesis that females do not understand sports idioms, common sports idioms were read aloud to college students to see whether males and females were equally knowledgeable about the meaning of the idioms. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 years old with the mean age of 21. Results indicated that females responded to 66% of the spoken idioms, while males responded to 72% of the items, a difference of 6%. The study also aimed to gather common sports idioms with which to train people in listening to understand sports idioms. A list of 42 sports idioms is included. (NKA)

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Listening to Sports Idioms

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by

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Listening to Interpret Sports Idioms

Deborah Tannen in her book Talking from 9 to 5 suggests that the feminine gender has difficulty listening to the masculine gender in the workplace because of the masculine inclination to talk sports the majority of the time. Tannen states that because the feminine people lack experience and interest in sports, they are at a disadvantage since sports talk permeates office conversation. Beyond the talk of teams, players, and win-loss records, the masculine people in the office incorporates sports in the business language. They use sports idioms, metaphors and cliches, making business a peculiar language which excludes "naïve" listeners, the feminine gender.

Whether the masculine gender intentionally excludes the non-sports gender or for that matter whether or not office talk is sports oriented is beyond the scope of this paper. Here we merely are trying to collect sports idioms and to quasi-test the hypothesis that the feminine gender does not understand sports idioms.

For this study we read aloud common sports idioms and asked college students what each meant, or write nothing if they had no idea about the meaning. We then took the number of attempts at translating the idioms, no matter what the attempt was, by male and female participants. We then added up the attempts by the males and females separately to determine if the mean scores show a significant difference between male and female scores. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 years with the mean age of 21. The results indicated that females responded to 66% of the spoken idioms; whereas the males responded to 72%, a difference of 6%.

This is also an attempt to gather common sports idioms with which to train people in listening to understand sports idioms. How well can you do as I read the idioms.

Throw in the towel

Saved by the bell

Go to a neutral corner

Take the full count

They scored on that one.

They punted it.

End run

Down the middle

Spiked it

In the penalty box

He's got two strikes against him.

He couldn't get to first-base.

He threw me a curve that time.

I'll take a rain-check on it.

He went to bat for me.

I liked him right off the bat.

He's a foul ball.

Out in left field

You're way off base.

It was a smash hit.

Take a seventh-inning streich.

Touch all the bases.

Pinch-hit for me?

He doesn't even know who's on first.

I just call 'em as I see 'em.

He's only a bush-leaguer.

Major league all the way.

We'll hit 'em where they ain't.

He has a lot on the ball.

He really dropped the ball that time.

We'll rally in the ninth.

No game's over until the last man's out.

Go for singles not home runs.

They'll bring in the big bats now.

He checked the batter with that one.

They bean balled him.

He's a wild pitch.

He got picked off between first and second.

Out of the ball park

Check your swing on that one

Down and inside

The clean up batter

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